



Senior Airman John Ludlow and Airman 1st Class Christopher Oldenburg, 90th Missile Maintenance Squadron, work on replacing a battery charger.



Photos by Senior Airman Tonnette Boyd

The team is responsible for trouble shooting security alarms, repairing and replacing missile capsules and keeping the missiles on alert.

Training never ends at 90 MOS



The 90th Maintenance Operation Squadron Electronic Mechanical Team remove and replace a battery charger during team training March 18.

Senior Airman Tonnette Boyd
Public affairs

Did you know the Airmen responsible for the operation and upkeep of Warren's missiles are in training for their jobs from the ranks of airman basic to senior master sergeant? At the 90th Maintenance Operations Squadron, there's no such thing as someone who knows it all.

"Even for me as an officer, every month I have training to do, even though I don't turn a wrench," says 2nd Lt. Pat Menke, 90 MOS officer in charge of team training. "It's really in-depth."

Once Airmen finish their basic training at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas they attend a three-to-six month technical school at Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif.

From there, instead of going right into their five-level on-the-job training, they'll complete training in other areas such as vehicle operations while waiting as long as 18 months for security clearances. Once that's done, they're finally allowed to begin team training toward their five-level certification. An Airman in MOS could work and train as long as two years without even beginning their five-level tasks.

But once they do, the real fun begins. The mock-up missiles Peacekeeper and Minuteman III, along with Class 1, 2 and 3 missile equipment models throughout the building, serve as life-size three-dimensional tools for hands-on training. They represent "exactly what you'd see out in the field, [but] there's nothing 'live' in terms of any kind of explosives ... it's operationally configured, but all the components would be inert," said Tech. Sgt. Brett Ragsdale, 90 MOS non-commissioned officer in charge of trainer maintenance.

Every step of the way the students are followed by at least two instructors, with the technical operations manuals and lesson plans always on hand, open and followed to the letter. For at least another three months the Airmen qualify on each piece

of equipment, under guidelines far more strict than most other fields in the Air Force.

"We have a zero tolerance when you're doing maintenance. If you make a mistake, you are going to be standing in front of the commander explaining why. Sometimes that could mean you're never going to be a maintenance technician again," said Lieutenant Menke. An act as common as misplacing a tool will result in swift accountability in the maintenance squadron. Finally, after what amounts for some to two and a half years of training, they 'graduate' to five-level troops qualified to work in the field, though still under strict supervision and with easy access to an instructor if they have any questions.

The program proved its effectiveness during Warren most recent Combat Capability Assessment. The CCA awarded 90 MOS with an 'excellent' rating, citing "exceptional knowledge and innovative instructor techniques ... outstanding TO (technical order) usage and student control ... [and] team coordination [and] technical data usage [rated as] superior," according to the official 90th Space Wing CCA report.

"Our CCA results are a perfect example; one of the three instructors that got evaluated down here [received] an 'outstanding' on their evaluation," said Lieutenant Menke.

Not a small feat, considering their training management advisors department tracks all qualifications standings and recurring training schedules for more than 700 Airmen in the squadron. Or that the vehicle operations section is tasked with training 400 to 500 Airmen within 10-month periods, and meets the requirements.

"That's really a testament to the level of our instructors and our scheduling process," said Lieutenant Menke.

"I get passionate about this; I'll get inspectors coming through, and it's not that I [brag,] it's that the stuff these [Airmen] do really is that cool," said Lieutenant Menke.